

CIA probe may cause loss of outside agents

Near the top of many crises afflicting the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), stemming mainly from congressional investigations and "tell-all" exposes, is the threat that the CIA will lose scores of outside "agents" essential to its work.

That crisis is sure to be hastened by the trial on conspiracy and perjury charges of two ITT officials. They denied under oath to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that ITT conspired with the CIA against Chile's Marxist government headed by Salvador Allende.

The decision to indict the two officials was taken by the Justice Department over private CIA warnings. Evidence produced at the trial, the CIA contended, could compromise future CIA recruitment for undercover

work of foreign citizens — and, occasionally, U.S. citizens.

Espionage and other forms of covert activity by any intelligence organization worthy of the name have always depended on help from outsiders. By disclosing details of an ITT-CIA link, the trial could undercut most of all future arrangements between the CIA and private citizens.

Worse yet, say some CIA officials, it could expose past help for the CIA from friendly foreign governments. That would cut off another essential part of the American intelligence system.

Whether this happens may depend on the judge named to hear the trial. A tough judge could insist that all secret details of cooperation be made public.

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